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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 002649

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR
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WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/26/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: CHARLES HENRI BAKER: SAVING THE SINKING SHIP

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Douglas M. Griffiths for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. On October 24, Charge met with independent presidential candidate Charles Henri "Charlito" Baker at his request. Baker, a light-skinned Haitian who has been dismissed by some as the candidate of the elite, claims that the average Haitian cares not about skin color but about who will "save the sinking ship." Faced with claims that he is not "Haitian" because of his heritage, Baker was insistent that the IGOH was specifically targeting him. Baker accused the IGOH of tampering with Haitian archives in order to erase proof of his Haitian origin. He specifically implicated Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue and Interim Interior Minister Paul Magloire. He also stated that many candidates, particularly those of rural origins, would have a difficult time complying with the Commission on Nationality requirement that they produce Haitian birth certificates for both of their parents. END SUMMARY.

Commission on Nationality ---

12. (C) Baker told Charge of his belief that he was the target of the Commission on Nationality created by Prime Minister Latortue. Baker said that it was only with great difficulty that he was able to produce sufficient proof of his parents' birth in Haiti to satisfy the demands of the Commission. He stated that according to Conseil des Sages and Electoral Support Committee member Daniele Magloire, the only two candidates approved thus far were himself and Paul Denis of OPL. Baker stated that two different sets of archives, one in Plaisance and one in Port-au-Prince, were tampered with to hide proof of his parents' Haitian origin, and he accused Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue and Interim Interior Minister Paul Magloire of conspiring against his candidacy to the benefit of Evans Paul, "their" presidential candidate.

13. (C) Baker also stated that the Commission on Nationality's birth certificate requirement would make it extremely difficult for some candidates, particularly those of rural origin, to prove their Haitian roots. The Haitian archival system is archaic at best, and often anarchic. He stated that unless the Commission limited itself to presidential candidates, election delays would be unavoidable. Personally, Baker said that the requirement and the rumors concerning his eligibility were hurting his ability to raise funds as potential donors were adopting a "wait and see" approach.

Industrialist of the People ---

14. (C) On issues, Baker was expansive. He stated that wherever he has traveled on the campaign trail he has found a Haitian populace far more concerned with issues than the usual cynical self-interest. He told Charge that he does not promise anything at his campaign events and puts the onus on the audience to work together to improve their local situation. He claimed that this fresh approach is resonating throughout the Haitian countryside. Security, police and justice remain everyone's top priority, said Baker, but in the countryside access to drainage, irrigation, roads and agricultural markets are major areas of concern. Baker told the Charge that he would immediately revive the cultivation of tobacco and winter vegetables should he become president. He stated that preferential trade legislation for Haitian garment manufacturers would likely do little to revive the industry, as it was too weak in its current form.

15. (C) Baker stated that he had already formed an alliance with the Konba party of Chavannes Jean-Baptiste. (NOTE: Konba, a populist party largely concerned with agrarian reform, is strongest in the Artibonite and Central Plateau, regions where Dumarsais Simeus and Rene Preval also believe they will run well. Baker's strength in that region is due to his previous work there for the U.S.-owned cigarette company Comme Il Faut. END NOTE.) He also stated that he had made overtures toward OPL (Paul Denis) and Fusion (Serge Gilles)

in the hope of creating a powerful alliance before the first round of presidential elections. Baker said that any pre-election alliances would have to be made before the ballots were printed. Therefore, he speculated, the next couple of weeks will see frantic maneuvering and horse-trading. Between Konba and his other candidates, Baker stated that he had the support of 8 senate candidates, a large number of deputy candidates, and approximately 144 local cartels, but he was evasive about further specifics.

16. (C) Baker called former president Rene Preval an "assassin" and stated that he was not worried about his candidacy, though he speculated that former president Aristide would wind up supporting Preval. He made reference to the infamous "swim to get out" mantra from Preval's first administration, in which he told the public that if they didn't like Haiti they were welcome to swim for it. By contrast, Baker said he will ask the Haitians to work together to survive. He stated that he had ethical concerns about Alyans candidate Evans Paul. The Charge asked if Baker had received or heard of offers of financial contributions from narco-traffickers, and Baker replied that he would leave that to the other candidates.

17. (C) COMMENT. Baker's claim of popular support may not be as preposterous as some believe. Anecdotal reports credit him with good word of mouth, and he was able to assemble 100,000 signatures, far more than necessary to register as an independent. His independent candidacy still faces multiple hurdles. An alliance between Baker, Denis and Serge Gilles would throw a fourth powerful constituency into play against Bazin, Simeus and Preval. END COMMENT.
GRIFFITHS